

**State Report Compares Gallbladder Removal in Utah Facilities**  
*Outpatient and inpatient procedures included in the report*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Nearly 150 Utahns have their gallbladder removed every week. Commonly known as cholecystectomy, or chole, gallbladder removal has become a fairly common procedure on an outpatient basis. Physicians at Utah’s health care facilities performed more than 7,800 gallbladder removals in 2005. To help inform residents of their choices when seeking medical care, the *Utah Hospital Comparison Report on Adult Gallbladder Surgeries for Inpatients and Outpatients* was released today by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Health Data Committee.

In Utah, about 95% of gallbladder removals were performed using laparoscopic (lap) surgery in 2005. Over 70% of these surgeries occurred in an outpatient setting. Lap surgery is the removal of the gallbladder using several very small incisions instead of the more traditional ‘open’ method of a single larger, more invasive incision. Patients generally recover more quickly after a lap procedure; however, some laps can change mid-procedure to an open surgery if the patient’s safety is at risk. In these cases, the report states that open surgery is not necessarily an indication of lower quality of care. Other patients with known complex medical problems or history may require planned open surgery.

The report examines 2005 average hospital charges for gallbladder removal procedures in Utah. For example, the lowest average charge for treating lap outpatients was \$2,050 at St. Mark’s Outpatient Surgical Center (Salt Lake County); the highest average charge was reported by Mountain West Medical Center (Tooele County) at \$11,470. Among lap inpatients with “minor” or “moderate” illness, the lowest average hospital charge was \$5,951 at Central Valley Medical Center (Juab County), while the highest was \$15,482 at Pioneer Valley Hospital (Salt Lake County).

## Page 2 of 2 – State Report Compares Gallbladder Removal in Utah Facilities

For outpatients, the average charge may include physicians' professional fees or patient personal costs like copays and coinsurance, whereas, for inpatient average charge, professional fees and personal costs are not included. Readers of the report are advised that many factors can affect the cost of a facility stay, including whether they have health insurance, the type of insurance and the billing procedures at the facility.

The report also helps readers compare the percentage of lap gallbladder removals performed at Utah hospitals in 2005. Utah overall had a higher rate (83%) of lap inpatients than similar patients in the U.S. (75%). Fifteen (15) Utah hospitals had a higher percentage of inpatient lap gallbladder removals when compared to national counterparts. Six hospitals with a lower percentage versus the nation tend to treat inpatients with more complex gallbladder problems and medical history. Hospitals that treated fewer than 30 patients for gallbladder removal during the period were not included in the analysis.

Since December 2005, the committee has released a total of seven hospital comparison reports addressing various medical areas such as heart conditions and surgeries, hip and knee surgeries, maternity and newborns, and pneumonia hospitalizations. Updates for these reports are due for release later in the year. Unlike previous hospital comparison reports, outpatient data is presented for both charges and utilization.

"Utahns will find this report be both interesting and helpful," said Keely Cofrin, Ph.D., executive secretary for the Health Data Committee. "Readers can become more informed about gallbladder removal, especially those procedures done in Utah health care facilities."

The full report can be found at <http://health.utah.gov/myhealthcare>.

# # #

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*